

## **GOP senators defend CIA in alternate report**

Topaz, Jonathan, "GOP Senators Defend CIA in Alternate Report." *POLITICO*, 9 December 2014, <https://www.politico.com/story/2014/12/gop-senators-defend-cia-alternate-report-113434>.

The report, issued by the committee's outgoing senior Republican, Saxby Chambliss of Georgia, stands in stark contrast to Chairwoman Dianne Feinstein's (D-Calif.) highly critical findings asserting that the CIA misled the public, Congress and the White House about its enhanced interrogation program.

"We have no doubt that the CIA's detention program saved lives and played a vital role in weakening Al Qaeda while the program was in operation," the Republican senators concluded.

The GOP report decried the Feinstein study, arguing that it contained "faulty analysis, serious inaccuracies, and misrepresentations of fact" to create a series of false conclusions about the counterterrorism program's effectiveness and the CIA's interactions with Congress and the White House.

The authors accused Democrats of failing to be objective when compiling their findings and for harboring "political motivations" in their review, criticisms they said some intelligence officials have also leveled. The Republicans also lamented that the report's commission cost U.S. taxpayers \$40 million.

The minority report largely serves as a point-by-point rebuttal to Feinstein's, particularly the conclusion that enhanced interrogation techniques were not effective in collecting useful intelligence for threats against the U.S. But the report downplays the emphasis on the interrogation tactics — which many critics have called torture — as being a minor part of the overall CIA counterterrorism operation.

"The rendition, detention, and interrogation program they created, of which enhanced interrogation was only a small part, enabled a stream of collection and intelligence validation that was unprecedented," the report said. "The most important capability this program provided had nothing to do with enhanced interrogation — it was the ability to hold and question terrorists, who, if released, would certainly return to the fight, but whose guilt would be difficult to establish in a criminal proceeding without compromising sensitive sources and methods."

The study also rejected the notion that the CIA attempted to restrict congressional oversight and misled the White House and Justice Department on the extent of the program and its effectiveness.

The Chambliss report does not completely absolve the CIA of wrongdoing, noting that the program "had flaws" and citing at least one CIA source who had fabricated information. The senators also say that the U.S. needs to have a "serious debate" regarding "whether the CIA should operate a clandestine detention program and whether it is in America's interests to interrogate suspected terrorists using methods beyond those in the U.S. Army Field Manual."

The senators were also careful to note that their conclusion that enhanced interrogation techniques proved effective in the past "should not be read as an endorsement of any of these particular enhanced interrogation techniques."

Incoming Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Richard Burr of North Carolina, Jim Risch of Idaho, Dan Coats of Indiana, Marco Rubio of Florida and Tom Coburn of Oklahoma also signed the report.

Sen. Susan Collins was the only Intelligence Committee Republican not to join the minority report. In a statement released Tuesday, Collins expressed concerns about the process by which the Feinstein report was crafted but said the Bush-era counterterrorism tactics amounted to torture.

“Despite these significant flaws, the report’s findings lead me to conclude that some detainees were subjected to techniques that constituted torture,” the Maine Republican said in a statement. “This inhumane and brutal treatment never should have occurred.”

The GOP report, highly supportive of the CIA and its counterterrorism operations, indicates that reactions to the Bush-era tactics used in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks largely remain divided along partisan lines. Republicans largely did not participate in the preparation of the majority report, and some have spoken out against its release. House Intelligence Committee Chairman Mike Rogers of Michigan said its release “will cause violence and deaths.”

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